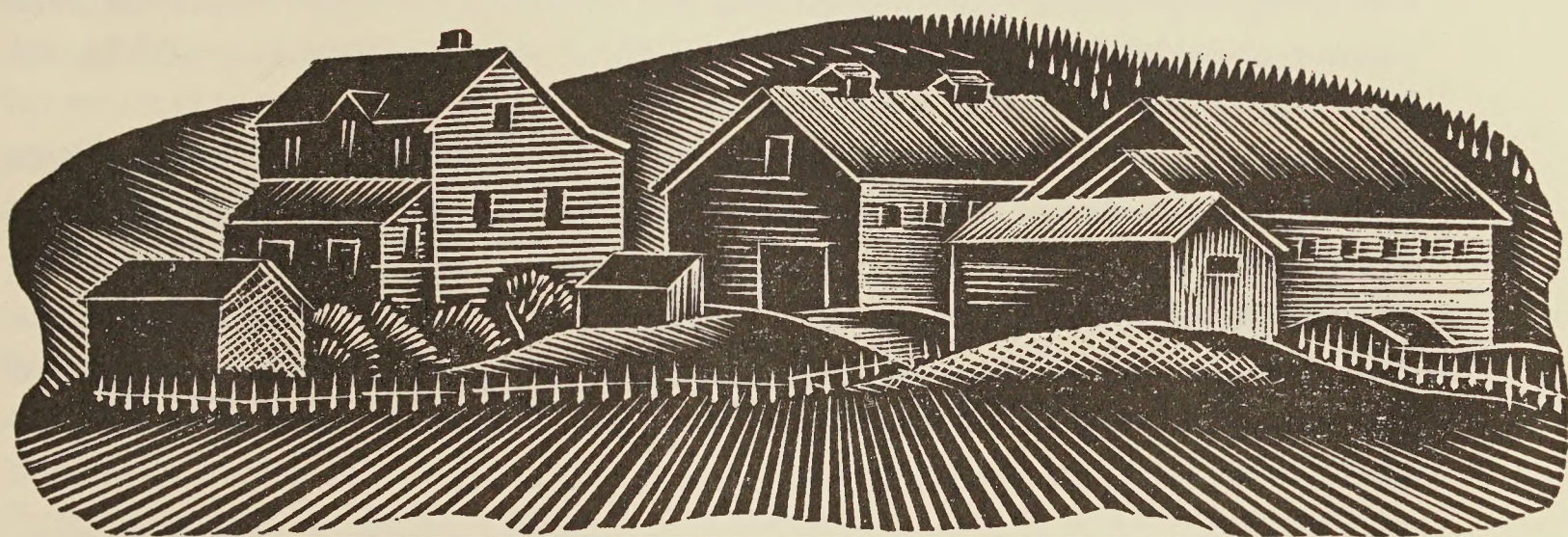


# THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY

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*Special Issue: Book Recommendations by*

NICK ARETAKIS † SIMON BEATTIE † DUDLEY CARLSON  
MICAELA CLARK † CAIT COKER † LISA DUNSETH  
MICHAEL GORMAN † SUSAN R. HANES † ERIC HEIMAN  
FRITZ KASTEN † MARK SAMUELS LASNER  
GRENDL LÖFKVIST † MATHIEU LOMMEN  
BROOKE SYLVIA PALMIERI † HARRY REESE  
SANDRA REESE † KIM SCHWENK

*Mallette Dean, a Printmaker and His Art* BY JOHN HAWK



*From the Supervising Editor*

I am delighted to report that democratic ideals are alive and very well at the Book Club. In this special issue of the *Quarterly*, the Publications Committee has reached out to friends and colleagues for recommendations of their favorite books. The results are in, and we can call our democratization project a resounding success. Recommendations have poured in from all over the U. S. and even abroad. The biggest surprise? A pre-Raphaelite scholar and collector recommending a book about bunnies.

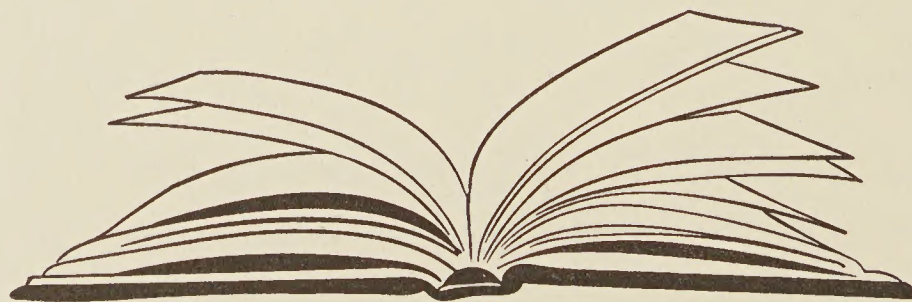
While I have not included a recommendation of my own in this issue, I am going to take the opportunity to mention two books that I love. Alan Loney's *The books to come* (Cuneiform Press, 2010) is indispensable to anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the nature of the book as a material object, among many other insights. *The Colt Springs High* (Book Club of California, 2004) is William Matson Roth's delightful memoir about his time at the Colt Press, and of course most particularly with his collaborator, the incomparable Jane Grabhorn.

While you're reading, don't miss John Hawk's insightful talk, reproduced here, about The Book Club's newest publication, *Mallette Dean, a Printmaker and His Art*. And be sure to order your copy if you haven't already.

I want to thank the Publications Committee members, Michael Carabetta, Robert McCamant and Kate Mitas, for gathering such a smart and diverse group of recommenders. And thanks to everyone who took the time to send us their recommendations. We all have lots of reading ahead thanks to you.

Kathleen Walkup, *Supervising Editor*

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## † Narratives of Personal Experience by William S. Reese

NICK ARETAKIS

William S. Reese, who died on June 4, 2018 from the effects of cancer, aged 62, was arguably the most important and influential American bookseller of the past fifty years. In the field of Americana there is no argument – he reigned supreme and his voice was authoritative. I had the great privilege of working as an associate in the Americana Department of the William Reese Company for fourteen years, leaving in 2014 to start my own firm. I can very easily conjure Bill's voice in my mind – his thoughts, advice, and teachings guide me every day, in any number of ways. In the two years before his death Bill was incredibly prolific, producing four "best books" lists – on the Revolution, the Federal Era, Western Americana and, most recently, on British North America during the period of the French and Indian War. Added to these was a volume of essays on Americanists and the rare book market, bringing together his writings over a period of thirty years. However, it is in Bill's volume of 101 recommendations of books that are "Narratives of Personal Experience," that I hear his voice most clearly, that reminds me most of his qualities, and that I believe begins to give a portrait of the man himself.

In *Narratives of Personal Experience* Bill Reese is not trying to *sell* you any particular book, he is simply recommending books that you might want to *read*, and that is but one of the gifts of this deeply personal and engaging book. Pleasure derived through reading is the goal of this work, which Bill describes as a "guide to good reading, not a 'best books' list." In this list of books he has read and re-read he focusses on autobiographies, diaries, travel accounts, reporting, collections of letters – all of which fall into a category Bill calls "narratives of personal experience." Why he chose this genre for a "guide to good reading" is not explicitly stated, though in reading the book one begins to discern the reasons: the works included cover the broad scope of human experience and history over the past 250 years. Memoirs of childhood – some happy, others not so happy; war and peace and politics; travel, exploration, and adventure; high life and low life. In short, the whole range of human endeavor, united by the qualities of good writing and self-awareness, and the leaven of humor. For a man as intensely curious about people and the world around him as Bill was, the choice of this favored genre becomes obvious.

Many of the titles that are described in this book I discussed with Bill over the years. Several of them he put into my hands with a recommendation to read. Those that I did read invariably brought me great insight and enjoyment. One of the surprising things to me in reading this book is the number of favored authors that Bill and I shared that we never discussed: George Orwell, Vladimir Nabokov, Martin Amis, and Garry Wills, among others. I am sorry that we did not have those conversations, but this book helps remedy that loss in a small way. For example, his comments on Wills's *Lead Time*, a collection of journalistic pieces, reminds me of the many things I admire about his books. They are, Bill writes, "clear and well-paced, observant and insightful.. full of wry humor."



A great feature of Bill's list is its wide-ranging diversity, discussing obscure works side-by-side with well-known authors. A good example is found three-quarters of the way through the book, with entries on American journalist Stephen Powers's *Afoot and Alone*, describing an 1869 walk across the United States, and Antoine Saint-Exupéry's *Wind, Sand, and Stars*, his account of surviving a 1935 airplane crash in the Sahara. Sandwiched between the American walker and the French flyer is the memoir of the Rolling Stones' Keith Richards, a hero of Bill's for "his sense of total commitment," and for living a life with "no regrets – what he did, he did, and lived with the consequences."

It is in the idiosyncrasies of Bill's list that more aspects of his interests and personality emerge. Jim Corbett's *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, a memoir of hunting tigers in India is, to Bill, "one of the best books ever written. I have read the stories in it a number of times in my life and have always been gripped by their intensity of feeling masked in unadorned prose." Poet and critic John Malcolm Brinnin's account of Dylan Thomas's tours of America "has the fascination of a slow motion car wreck.... This is a wonderfully well written book, and I am still not sure if I am drawn to it for its literary qualities or the voyeuristic spectacle it chronicles." Bill was not so uncertain of his feelings about Henry Miller, who he considered "an arrogant, conceited prick." Such intense personal dislike, however, does not keep him from recommending *The Colossus of Maroussi*, an account of Miller's travels in Greece in the late 1930s, though he concludes his entry by cautioning us: "Don't have anything else to do with Henry Miller." I remember hearing Bill talk about all three of these books, to me and to others. I feel now a renewed urge to read them and many of the other books described herein.

Indeed, for me two of the very striking aspects revealed by Bill's list of recommended books are how personal the list is, and how important reading was for him from his youngest years and throughout his life. For example, his entry on Audubon's *Ornithological Biography* begins "Since I was a little boy, my entire career path has been shaped by John James Audubon. A love of birds led me to staring hard at an Audubon print in my parents' dining room, which led to a curiosity about him and his works, which led to my father taking me to the Old Print Shop to look at Audubon prints... and so it went. Many tens of thousands of books later, Audubon has remained close to my heart." Career shaping indeed – Bill's first purchase of an expensive book was as an adolescent, when he bought a set of the octavo edition of Audubon's *Birds of America* from Mabel Zahn of Sessler's Book Shop in Philadelphia. One of his last major deals, accomplished in the final months of his life, was the private sale of a set of the double elephant folio edition of Audubon's *Birds*.

Of Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals*, Bill relates, "This book was a favorite text of my childhood.... My mother read it to my sisters and me when we were children, and later, on holidays when we were together, we would take turns reading it to each other." This theme of sharing books with friends and family recurs often – several times Bill mentions how a favorite book was recommended to him by one of his sisters, or a close college friend, or by his good friend Michael Zinman (the noted collector who introduced him to the writings of A.J. Liebling). And in this



same way Bill Reese has done his own readers the same deeply personal and warm kindness, offering his own recommendations of books that he has enjoyed, and that we might as well.

*Nick Aretakis is an antiquarian bookseller in Manteca, California, specializing in books, manuscripts, and visual material on American history and the American West.*

† *Verleger, Buchhändler & Antiquare aus Deutschland und Österreich in der Emigration nach 1933* by Ernst Fischer

SIMON BEATTIE

In his 1986 Malkin Lecture at Columbia University, Barney Rosenthal said: "Something very important happened in the world of rare books in this country in the nineteen-thirties and forties ... the exodus of the German and Austrian booksellers which followed the rise of Nazism in Europe." Barney termed this exodus the Gentle Invasion, "something which ... changed this little world of ours dramatically, and permanently ... Since by far the largest number of these booksellers, and booksellers-to-be, settled in the United States, it is here that their impact has been most profound. Yet their story as a whole has not been told."

The book I'd like to recommend does just that. Published in 2011 by the Verband Deutscher Antiquare (the German antiquarian booksellers' association), after years of research, and as a memorial to those publishers, booksellers, and antiquarian book dealers who were driven out of Germany and Austria at that time, Ernst Fischer's *Verleger, Buchhändler & Antiquare aus Deutschland und Österreich in der Emigration nach 1933. Ein biographisches Handbuch* contains over 800 entries, with a phenomenally wide compass: writers, scientists, critics, and intellectuals who perhaps only worked briefly in publishing are also included. It has become the standard reference work on the subject. I'm sure, like me, you often reach for a biographical dictionary when wanting to know more about, say, an author, or to help identify a former owner from a bookplate or an inscription. Fischer's book is equally useful for provenance research, if you come across the label of an émigré bookseller in a book. This may not be a book I use every day, but it is always useful, and makes fascinating reading, when I do.

Barney's lecture (published by Columbia University as *The Gentle Invasion: Continental Emigré Booksellers of the Thirties and Forties and Their Impact on the Antiquarian Booktrade in the United States* in 1987) reminds us that the ABAA was not created until 1949, after the Gentle Invasion had taken place, and it is heartening to read not just how my forebears in the trade managed to escape persecution, but how they were often supported by their bookselling peers. As the motto of that other great post-War bibliopolic creation, ILAB (the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, founded 1947), reminds us: *Amor librorum nos unit*. The love of books unites us.

*Simon Beattie is an antiquarian bookseller, based in Chesham (UK).*



‡ How the Heather Looks; A Joyous Journey to the British Sources of Children's Books by Joan Bodger

DUDLEY CARLSON

In 1958 Bodger and her husband, both scholars, took their children, ages 2-1/2 and 9, to England for an extended holiday, hoping to locate the sites familiar and beloved from their reading: Pooh's Enchanted Place, Arthur's Camelot, Toad Hall, Narnia, the landscapes of Caldecott's rhymes, and more. Her account of their travels (and their reading) is rich in detail and in adventures and, though now more than half a century old, still stands as a splendid guide for those who would follow suit. And for the uninitiated, it provides a treasure trove of starting places, whether for reading to children or reading *about* the literature created for them, and its creators.

*Dudley Carlson, Manager of Youth Services at Princeton (NJ) Public Library from 1973 to 1998, is a Life Member of the American Library Association and recipient of a Distinguished Service Award from the Association for Library Service to Children.*

‡ Thinking Outside the Book by Augusta Rohrbach

MICAELA CLARK

If there was one book I felt was essential to bibliography, it would be Augusta Rohrbach's *Thinking Outside the Book*. Published by the University of Massachusetts Press, *Thinking Outside the Book* examines and to a point, *dismantles*, the terminology used to define what books are and are not so as to challenge an often ignored dominant narrative that persists in the study of the history of the book. Which is to say, this book exists as testament to the fact that there is a point wherein book history and literary history intersect leaving out the voices of marginalized groups and for the fact that it challenges the idea of what a book is allowed to be, the book brings me great joy.

I don't think I've ever read a book about the history of books that looked at what the "book" was across a social, cultural and literary context and actually presented the argument that how we've come to understand literacy, authorship, publication and editing – words that dominate the larger conversation around book history and print culture – is primarily shaped by colonization. It is absolutely necessary for any person interested in the history of books (in America) to read because it offers a perspective for the fluidity of the book with regard to social and cultural views from both Native and African Americans at the time in which a national literary history was taking shape. It helps one to understand how the terminologies used to define the study of the book inform whose history is being told and why.

It is a fascinating read that introduces the idea of intersectionality to the history of the book.

*Micaela Clark is a recent Mills grad who loves books on books.*



## ¶ How to Suppress Women's Writing by Joanna Russ

CAIT COKER

Some ten years ago I was poking about in a used bookstore in Texas when I came across *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. At the time I knew Joanna Russ only as a science fiction writer who had written a number of novels in the 1970s and then, puzzlingly, stopped; I had no idea she had written critical nonfiction at all, let alone several volumes of it. First published in 1983, this particular book had been out of print for at least twenty years or more; in 2016 the University of Texas Press re-released it as a Print On Demand text available through their website, and the new edition with Crispin's prefatory essay was released in April 2018. When I started reading, I had no idea exactly how much this book would end up influencing my then-nascent academic career (in fact, when I began building the *Women in Book History Bibliography*, Russ was one of the first entries), or how often I would see its arguments enacted over and over again in newspapers, magazines, conference presentations, and in academic journals.

*How to Suppress Women's Writing* belongs on the bookshelf of every reader who is interested in the history of women writers. The book is remarkable for how concisely Russ presents the common dismissals of women's writing both in history and in academe: "She didn't write it... She wrote it, but look what she wrote about... She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it... She wrote it, but she isn't really an artist, and it isn't really art..." and so on. From denial of agency to denial of authorship to denigration of the art in question, Russ provides example after example and case study after case study to demonstrate how widespread and common the problem was—and still is—for championing women writers throughout history (and particularly those from before the nineteenth century). In its original context of second-wave feminism, the book was on the leading edge of groundbreaking work on the topic, appearing within a few years of other classics such as Gubar & Gilbert's *The Madwoman in the Attic* and Todd's *Feminist Literary History*, among many others. Russ's writing is also compulsively readable, something that can't always be said of academic texts then or now. Indeed, in shades of her previous career as a science fiction writer, the text is bookended with a thought experiment in definitions of an intergalactic standard, proving that concepts are difficult to define, and that the meaning of words—or the lack thereof—directly affects how history is written. (And in my humble opinion, it would have been more fun to learn about the Glotologs!)

While it is not up to date on the newest scholarship, its arguments remain relevant and vital to the field, as a true classic should. Jessa Crispin says as much in her prefatory essay to the new edition, though she argues that Russ represented a problematic sort of white feminism that is out of date now. "I am worried the new readers will mostly see themselves as the suppressed and not the suppressors," she writes, overlooking that Russ makes a point of talking about intersections of race and class as well as gender in the text, and that she references Phyllis Wheatley in a time when the eighteenth century black author was almost unheard of. "Intersectionality" was not a byword until



1989, six years after Russ's book, but that doesn't mean Russ didn't attempt to be better than her forebears—or even many writers who would come well after her.

It's hard to say how much this book means to me without being repetitive, but I will close with a brief note about a symposium my mentor Margaret Ezell hosted a few years ago on "She Wrote It, But." At the end of the meeting I asked the women scholars who are doing work on women's book history today (Ezell, Michelle Levy, Helen Smith, Laura Estill, and Laura Mandell—all of whom are doing exciting, revisionary stuff!) to sign my much battered copy of Russ. It gives me a lot of pleasure to have a physical record of meeting people whose books mean a lot to me, especially since I never got to meet Russ, who died in 2011. Women do not and have never written in a vacuum; the books we have are always meant to be shared. This is one book that if I could press it into your hands right now, I would.

*Cait Coker is a doctoral candidate at Texas A&M University and Co-Editor of the Women in Book History Bibliography online.*

‡ The Grabhorn Press: A Biography by Roby Wentz

‡ The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective by Mel Scott

‡ Larkspur Press: Forty Years of Making Letterpress Books in a Rural Kentucky Community, 1974-2014 compiled by Gabrielle Fox

LISA DUNSETH

I apologize for not being able to follow the rules. I recently retired from working with Special Collections at the San Francisco Public Library and have enjoyed ruminating on the request to recommend one book to readers of the Book Club of California Quarterly. Unfortunately, I can't possibly recommend one book. So I offer three:

*The Grabhorn Press: A Biography* by Roby Wentz [San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1981]. I suggest this one as a nod to the good work of the BCC but also as a tribute to my seven years of working with the Grabhorn Collection at the SFPL. This handsome book, printed at the Grace Hoper Press (with Felicia Rice) and with initials by Mallette Dean, was very helpful to me as I delved into San Francisco printing history. It introduced me to the Grabhorns and inspired me to continue learning about the traditional book arts. It is now part of my personal collection.

*The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective* by Mel Scott [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959, revised 1985] is an immensely readable and helpful book. It was an invaluable resource as I tackled my desire to better understand the history of our city and region. The author's scope, astute understanding, and ability to connect the dots left me wishing that he could revise his book a third time. Both editions sit on my bookshelves.



*Larkspur Press: Forty Years of Making Letterpress Books in a Rural Kentucky Community, 1974-2014* compiled by Gabrielle Fox [Kentville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press Limited, 2016]. I offer this one to my West Coast friends in case they've never heard of the sleepy little town of Monterey, Kentucky, and the fine work of Gray Zeitz. He has been printing, binding, and publishing Kentucky authors and poets, like Wendell Berry, since 1974. This retrospective serves as a comprehensive introduction to the history of the Larkspur Press and the beautiful, well-made, and affordable books they produce. Simply put, they are of notable quality, and several of them reside in my library.

*Lisa Dunseth is President of the NorCal chapter of the American Printing History Association.*

## ¶ Joe Hill by Wallace Stegner

MICHAEL GORMAN

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night  
 Alive as you and me  
 "But, Joe," said I "You're ten years dead."  
 "I never died," said he.  
 "I never died," said he.

I lived in the Central Valley of California for almost twenty years. At first, a stranger in a strange land, I was overwhelmed by the complexities—historical, geographic, sociological, and demographic—of the West and of California in particular. As any librarian would, I turned to books—at first those of the librarian and author Lawrence Clark Powell and the historian and librarian Kenneth Starr. Then I came across books by Wallace Stegner. All the sources say he was called "the Dean of Western Writers," though, as usual with the bestowing of such titles, by whom and how often remains obscure. His books do not need a trite journalistic accolade because anyone reading his writings will see readily that he was a writer of enormous scope, great gifts, and the passionate intensity sometimes found in the best (despite Yeats). He saw the faults and the myths of the West clearly but retained his humanistic belief that the vast region was "the New World's last chance to be something better, the only American society still malleable enough to be formed."

Wallace Stegner was born in Lake Mills, Iowa, in February 1909. He received a masters and a doctorate from the University of Iowa, and taught literature and creative writing at Utah, Wisconsin, and Harvard before becoming director of the Creative Writing Center at Stanford (1945-1971). Many of his students had substantial literary careers (they included Wendell Berry, Larry McMurtry, Edward Abbey, and Raymond Carver). Over more than fifty years he wrote many novels, histories, and collections of stories and essays. He was a committed environmentalist and a Pulitzer and National Book Award prizewinner.



Joe Hill, born Joel Emmanuel Hägglund and later known as Joseph Hillström, was born in Sweden in October 1879. He left his poverty stricken family and emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 23. He worked as a laborer, following the familiar path from New York west and ending up in California. (He was a survivor of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.) Hill was an active and ardent member of the IWW (International Workers of the World—the “Wobblies”) and became a labor organizer, an inspiring speaker, and the author of songs and satires for the cause. His songs include *The Rebel Girl* and *The Preacher and the Slave* (in which he coined “pie in the sky”). In 1914, a double murder was committed in Salt Lake City. On the evening of the murder, Joe Hill went to a doctor with a gunshot wound, said to have been acquired in a quarrel with a rival for a woman’s affections. His alibi was believed by many at the time and afterwards, but Hill was convicted of the murders. Despite doubts about his guilt and appeals for mercy from notables and labour organizers, he was executed by firing squad in November 1915 and became an enduring hero to the left.

“The copper bosses killed you, Joe.  
They shot you, Joe,” says I.  
“Takes more than guns to kill a man,”  
Says Joe, “I didn’t die.”  
Says Joe, “I didn’t die.”

Wallace Stegner once wrote: “In fiction I think we should have no agenda but to tell the truth.” His *The Preacher and the Slave* (later reissued as *Joe Hill*) was published in Boston by Houghton Mifflin in 1950. A biographical novel, it seeks to tease out the truth about a man who became an icon of labor and the truths and values that his legend embodies. The novel is written in the realist style familiar to readers of Dreiser and Upton Sinclair, interweaving Joe Hill’s life with the history of labor agitation and its savage repression in the early 20th century West—long before any laws protected the rights of labor and when employers made use of hired violent goons to battle, above all others, the IWW and its organizers. Stegner’s Joe is no saint—a complex character combining darkness and nobility and headed, with tragic inevitability, to a death that was martyrdom for some and just punishment to others. *Joe Hill* is a superb historical novel delineating both the West of the time and the “West” that is the stuff of dreams, epics, and enduring myth.

From San Diego up to Maine  
In every mine and mill  
Where working men defend their rights  
It’s there you’ll find Joe Hill.  
It’s there you’ll find Joe Hill.

*Michael Gorman is a retired academic librarian.*



☞ *Sun Signs from a Polar Star: a Northern Zodiac illustrated with wood engravings* by Dale DeArmond

SUSAN R. HANES

In considering what book I would recommend to members of the Book Club of California, I determined that it should fulfill two criteria. For it to pass muster among a group that itself produces books of high quality, it would have to be beautiful. And since the BCC is located in the West, it should have a relationship to that part of the United States. With those conditions in mind, I thought of a particular book in our collection.

*Sun Signs from a Polar Star: a Northern Zodiac* was printed and bound by Margaret Calvin of Old Harbor Press in Sitka, Alaska in 1993. A soft cover edition of 1,000 was printed, as well as two hardcover limited editions of 50 copies each. The two special editions are hardbound using mouldmade Italian paper. One of the special editions has a Japanese style binding and is printed on Mohawk paper. The principal edition is letter press printed on Arches Text Wove paper and has an accordion binding. The charming and evocative illustrations are printed from original wood engravings by Alaskan artist Dale DeArmond and the frontispiece of the special editions has an original wood engraving tipped in, hand-pulled and dated and signed by the artist.

Born in Bismarck, North Dakota in 1914, Dale Burlison DeArmond moved to Alaska in 1935, following her marriage to Sitka native Robert DeArmond. Although she found her niche as a librarian and eventually headed the thriving Juneau Public Library System, her true vocation as a wood engraver was inspired by the folklore of her adopted home. She died in Sitka in 2006, leaving the people of Alaska a rich legacy of her prints and books.

*Sun Signs* is a gem. We were only able to buy our limited edition copy after agreeing to join the Sitka Conservation Society during our visit there in 2009. The Old Harbor Press books were left to the Society by the Calvin family, close friends of the DeArmonds. Jack and Margaret Calvin founded the SCS in 1967, with a mission to protect the Tongass National Forest, the largest national forest in the United States. The receipts from the sale of these books have been used to commission further artwork that reflects the splendor of the landscapes and wildlife surrounding Sitka.

*A librarian by vocation, Susan Hanes considers herself a citizen of the world, having lived in ten countries, traveled independently to more than 70, and visited all 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces.*

☞ *Rolywholyover: A Circus exhibition catalog* by John Cage

ERIC HEIMAN

John Cage is an artist that looms large for me, and I was lucky enough to see this exhibition during a visit to New York. The exhibition used the chance operations so prevalent in Cage's work to constantly change what was on display and where each



work was positioned in the galleries. Only half of the work (of Cage's, of his contemporaries, and of his collaborators) in the show was on display at any one time and the lineup changed daily.

It's rare that an exhibition catalog captures the excitement and experience of seeing the art firsthand. But *Rolywholyover's* non-linear collection of loose-leaf art plates and pamphlets printed on translucent vellum in a reflective aluminum box is a treasure trove of inspiration that's fresh and new every time I open it. Cage often said that life is a circus. This catalog keeps that spirit alive.

*Eric Heiman, co-founder of Volume, a multidisciplinary design studio in San Francisco, teaches graphic design at California College of the Arts.*

## ¶ The Pat Hobby Stories by F. Scott Fitzgerald

FRITZ KASTEN

What is it about Hollywood? What is it that compels writers to consider Hollywood—probably more than any single setting—a place of turmoil and conflict? A land of the damaged and the down.

Perhaps it isn't unexpected that so much Hollywood-based writing is optioned for film. For many authors the terrain is not Sunnybrook Farm—it's a creative wonderland; a rich fabric of dramatic discontent.

Horace McCoy wrote his story, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* about depression-era marathon dancing and the film business. Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust* paints as bleak a picture as any of that milieu. Then there is crime fiction—Raymond Chandler's wonderfully spare noir writing, mentoring by example contemporary author Michael Connelly.

And a literary master once plied his trade there. F. Scott Fitzgerald spent his last few years in Hollywood, laboring with little commercial success at various writing tasks.

When Fitzgerald died in 1940, all of his books were essentially out of print: *This Side of Paradise*; the story collections so popular in the 20s; *The Beautiful and Damned*; *Tender Is the Night*; *Gatsby*.

A year ago, a first edition of *Gatsby* with first state dust jacket sold in New York for \$175,000. All of Fitzgerald's books are currently in print, selling considerable numbers each year, as newly launched English majors discover these essentials. *Gatsby*, I understand, sells a reliable and astonishing 500,000 units each year. What happens to them all, I wonder?

There is an outlier in this, however: *The Pat Hobby Stories* that I'm suggesting for your consideration—vastly more obscure and in my opinion, second only to *Gatsby* in excellence.

When Fitzgerald began writing these 17 masterpieces it was for desperately needed money. By this time, 1939, his work as a scriptwriter in Hollywood had all but disappeared. He was deeply in debt and racked by the serious health issues that were



to end his life a little over a year later. Hobby was Fitzgerald's last lifeline, a desperately needed segment of his diminished spiritual and financial income in that final year.

Fitzgerald was writing for MGM at the time, but was in danger of losing even that modest film work. His old friend, *Esquire* editor Arnold Gingrich, contacted him about fresh story ideas. Recall, this was the day when many magazines regularly supported fiction. Fitzgerald, in fact, had made a living writing short stories for magazines since his first novel was published—with spectacular sales—in 1919.

When Gingrich wrote him, Fitzgerald had been sketching out a long-form idea, an idea that was called finally, *The Last Tycoon*, a novel about Hollywood based on his experiences there and which he hoped would finally bring him back into the forefront of American fiction. So writing about Hollywood was on his mind.

Fitzgerald quickly wrote a single story for *Esquire* and Gingrich urged him to continue the series. But having written "Pat Hobby's Christmas Wish", Fitzgerald—ever the consummate professional—took considerable interest in his character, Pat Hobby, a broken-down scriptwriter and surrogate for himself. He became intensely involved in Hobby, endlessly editing and rewriting the stories—17 of them, finally—much to the dismay of his long-suffering editor, Gingrich.

As the series was published in *Esquire*, reaction was very positive and Gingrich felt that the stories represented Fitzgerald at his best. Doubtless had Fitzgerald lived, the stories would have contributed to *The Last Tycoon*, and it's my view that Fitzgerald would have regained the prominence that had increasingly eluded him since the publication of his first book.

It took until the nineteen fifties, however, for the literati to awaken to the fact that in Fitzgerald was the embodiment of American fiction. And that its author had written one of the greatest books in the canon—*The Great Gatsby*.

But Hobby touches *Gatsby* in its perfect realization of place, character and dialogue. A desperate Hobby and guard at the studio gate: "Where's Ike?" "Ike's gone". "But Ike always passes me." "That's why he's gone. What's your business?"

As Gingrich said in his forward to *The Pat Hobby Stories*, "It was commonly thought that Hobby was a hack, ergo, the stories are so." This was a great fallacy, according to Gingrich; when the stories were finally published in 1962, twenty-two years after the author's death, the writing was as good as any that Fitzgerald had produced.

I'll not go into any more detail, but if you have any interest at all in the golden age of the Hollywood film business; great character development; and in some of Fitzgerald's finest writing, run, don't walk to acquire a copy of this book.

*A book collector since his days at the University of Iowa, Fritz Kasten has worked as a copy-writer, editor, musician and music publisher.*



## ¶ *Voyage to the Bunny Planet* by Rosemary Wells

MARK SAMUELS LASNER

On a Sunday morning in 1992 I was eating breakfast and reading the Book Week section of the *Washington Post*. This was the annual children's books issue and in a sidebar there was a glowing review of *Voyage to the Bunny Planet*, by an author-illustrator I had never heard of—Rosemary Wells. It sounded so charming, and as the rabbit is my partner's totem animal, we went off (once dressed) to Barnes and Noble to buy a copy. *Voyage to the Bunny Planet* consists of three stories—*Moss Pillows*, *The Island Light*, and *First Tomato*, each telling the tale of a little bunny having a rotten time and then being whisked away to the Bunny Planet to experience the lovely day “that should have been.”

Although marketed for children the droll illustrations and subtle humor are best appreciated by adults. (It was months before I noticed the whimsical depictions of the Bunny Planet in history, featuring rabbit versions of Galileo, Benjamin Franklin, and Rudyard Kipling, on the versos of the title-pages.) The 1992 first edition takes the form of three small hardbacks, with dust jackets, inserted in a slipcase. The universal nature of the stories and the beautifully designed, bibliographically unique package together make this my favorite book produced in the last decade of the twentieth century. It is, as well, a suitable gift for any occasion.

*Collector (of Victorian literature and art), bibliographer, and occasional typographer Mark Samuels Lasner is Senior Research Fellow at the University of Delaware Library.*

## ¶ *El Club Dumas* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte

GREN DL LÖFKVIST

Imagine a historically accurate, well-researched murder mystery involving bewitching antiquarian books, the craft of woodblock printmaking, Medieval inquisitors, a heretic printer burned at the stake, double-dealing bookbinders, practitioners of the occult, intriguing printers' marks, artisanal forgers and their expertly crafted apocrypha, the shady, cutthroat world of unscrupulous book dealers... and Lucifer himself! Welcome to *The Club Dumas* by Spanish author Arturo Pérez-Reverte, one of my favorite guilty pleasures.

Near constant name-dropping of milestones in printing history, from the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili to the Champ Fleury, from the Nuremburg Chronicle to the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, interlaced with a thorough study of the life and works of Alexandre Dumas Père, will keep book collectors and print scholars in thrall. The author may not be a specialist, but he certainly did meticulous research on the crafts of letterpress printing and hand bookbinding, including the transition from woodcuts to copperplate printing, the intricacies of book restoration, and even the unsung skill of producing impeccable forgeries. And the fact that the principal book of interest is desperately sought after by a small community of esoteric and occult



practitioners of that infamous *other* Black Art is the Gothic icing on this sumptuous cake celebrating the Art Preservative.

Pérez-Reverte's writing style hovers between the swaggering prose of an Alexandre Dumas adventure and that of a gritty noir paperback. The women in his novels are usually armed with husky, breathy voices, impossibly leggy with ample bosoms straining the limits of their tight angora sweaters, and are rarely what they seem. And yet, despite their clear untrustworthiness, nothing stops the scrappy, self-serving protagonist, Lucas Corso, from bedding these femme fatales whenever their mutually Machiavellian needs coincide. Unless, of course, he has overindulged in gin, one of his other recurring vices.

The world of obsessive book collectors and the ruthless, mercenary book dealers who serve them is another aspect of this tome that would certainly interest members of the Book Club of California, especially those secretly wishing they had someone as persistent as Lucas Corso in their employ. Corso is a man willing to sell his soul (or better yet, someone else's) in order to obtain a rare book, and his efforts have the unfortunate side effect of resulting in the cold-blooded murders that drive the whodunit aspect of this book.

The main downsides to this novel are the repetitive and often excessively florid writing style and a surfeit of subplots with coincidences that border on the absurd — suspending disbelief is mandatory! Also, exact phrases such as “she smelled of heat and fever,” and “her liquid green eyes” are repeated so frequently that I had assumed laziness on the part of the translator, until I got ahold of the original Spanish text, which locates the blame squarely on Pérez-Reverte. And, as might be inferred, there is more than a whiff of sexism in the way women are portrayed in this novel. Finally, I can't say that I found the book's ending to be particularly satisfying, especially in the way Perez-Reverte halfheartedly attempts (and often fails) to tie up the myriad loose ends from his multiple simultaneous plot lines, but I am not certain how it could have been done differently other than editing out some of the more tangential plot details to begin with.

However, for readers looking for an engaging, adventurous, witty, and somewhat macabre tale, the pluses far outweigh the negatives: *The Club Dumas* is a very entertaining piece of bibliophilic escapism with a Luciferian edge.

*Grendl Löfkvist, Education Director at Letterform Archive, teaches type history and theory in the Type West program.*

## ¶ Cover Cover: Viktor & Rolf by Irma Boom

MATHIEU LOMMEN

Irma Boom is an internationally acclaimed Dutch book designer based in Amsterdam. In addition to making approachable books for a wide audience for institutions like the Rijksmuseum she has a passion for designing conceptual art books. *No 5 Culture Chanel*



(2013) for instance is a work done in white throughout, with image and text blind embossed, and *Hommage à Kelly* (2016) is a 1,216-page volume of pure colour blocks. She is always at her best in this double role as designer and author, and her recently published monograph on Victor & Rolf is a case in point.

The Amsterdam fashion designers Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren presented their first haute couture show in 1993. Since that time the two have made a name for themselves with their 'fashion as art' as much as with their commercial activities, including fashion accessories and perfumes. Their extravagant work of the past 25 years is now highlighted in the Netherlands by a large retrospective at the Rotterdam Kunsthall, while Irma Boom has produced a sculptural work on the celebrated duo.

Viktor & Rolf really broke through in 1999 with their Russian Doll show, a live performance in which they draped a single model with one layer of clothing after the other. Boom says she took this literal layering as the basis for the book form: she used sheets (34×95 cm) laid on top of each other and sewn in the middle. Boom experimented with the single-quire book form before, as in the Hella Jongerius monograph *Misfit* (2011). In this new book, the single quire has extra folds on both sides. Boom herself regards it as a layering of book covers, of exteriors, hence the title *Cover Cover*. To achieve this seemingly simple form was a technical challenge. The book has three paper weights for instance, with the lightest weight on the outside, so that the two folds billow perfectly.

*Cover Cover*, fitted in neon pink transparent plastic, showcases the oeuvre of Viktor & Rolf in an array of images, including sketches and stills from their catwalk shows. To create visual coherence in this widely varying material and achieve some degree of abstraction, the book is printed in inverted colours. Add to this all the possible combinations of images from their various fashion periods, and the result is an overview with countless spreads that are constantly unique. With this trade edition, the Irma Boom collectors can now add another stunning and affordable artist's book to their libraries.

*Mattieu Lommen is a design historian and a curator of graphic design at the University of Amsterdam; he has published several books in this field.*

## ‡ Queer Zines Volumes 1 & 2 by Philip Aarons and A. A. Bronson

BROOKE SYLVIA PALMIERI

"In the year 2189, an exhibition of the print of today's social movements would present a fluorescent-lit [sic] lineup of photocopy machines, from the era when anybody could push a photocopier button, and, if they had the knack, engage a readership. Informational plaques would discuss the harried office workers who copied reams of leaflets and underground 'zines while the boss was at lunch. Today, around New York ACT-UP, this activity is called Xerox Anonymous. Or 'taking a copy break.'" So runs a prophecy for a future New York Public Library exhibition in an 1989 article by Mark



Leger published in *Out/Look* magazine, "The Drag Queen in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Leger's article comprises one of many entries in Philip Aarons and A. A. Bronson's two-volume boxed set, *Queer Zines*, a kind of embodiment of the exhibition it once imagined.

*Queer Zines* is expansive in its coverage of over 240 titles, with "comprehensive bibliographies and sinful synopses" for each, combined new and reprinted articles about queer zines such as Leger's, lists of where queer zines are archived and where they continue to be sold around the world. As a teenager who read voraciously, to hold two hefty volumes documenting queer history from the early 1970s is first & foremost an experience I could not have daydreamed of having. As an adult, to have used one of those volumes to find safe and welcoming places to read and buy queer zines and make new friends in the cities I have visited is not an experience I can do without now that I have enjoyed it. And finally, in a world where queer visibility is constantly endangered, queer spaces constantly faced with closure, and larger institutions only barely able to represent life lived across the LGBTQ+ spectrum, *Queer Zines* remains a permanent exhibition in a long history marked by brutality and loss. It is as honest in documenting the horror and rage that comprise LGBTQ+ history as it is in capturing moments of love, lust, friendship, joy, and celebration. I have used this volume to deepen a sense of my own history, and to teach my students both about LGBTQ+ history and about the extent to which the documents and zines in which LGBTQ+ history survives contain a politics of their own in terms of the materials from which they are made and the means by which they are circulated.

Loss has structured the creation of *Queer Zines*, and not just insofar as the concept of any catalogue or bibliography is defined as a countermeasure against the loss of the items it gathers together. The first volume was issued in 2008, but after much of Printed Matter's archives were destroyed when Hurricane Sandy hit New York City in 2011, Aarons and Bronson decided the project ought to be revised and expanded. Publications and archives go hand in hand: make publications from archives and they spread the message more widely. Maintain archives that arise from the process of publication, and perpetuate the cycle. Beautifully designed and printed, *Queer Zines* copyright-free disclaimer further counters loss with its injunction to create: "You are free to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work...Any part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, without the prior written permission of the publishers." When silence equals death, better to speak, write, copy, distribute, display, perform.

Overflowing with camp, yawp, outcry, excess, and a lot of nudity, this bibliography does not sit silently in its slipcase or on the shelf. It belongs to a long tradition of texts that demand their readers become writers, publishers, pamphleteers, zinemakers. (As St. Jerome wrote of/to Pope Damasus in the 4th century: "In your eyes to read without writing is to sleep." And as an imprisoned Quaker wrote in a pamphlet describing prison conditions in London in 1660: "Reader, it is expedient that we publish.") Within this tradition of radical pamphleteering distinct to the invention of the



printing press, which the advent of photocopy technology made possible on a whole new level, that *Queer Zines* is copyright-free to embody the politics of many of the zines and zinemakers it represents. Form and content should be so lucky as to dovetail so completely as they do in these volumes. And that might be the reason to have them on your shelf above all others: it's hugely significant that a work's authors are confident enough in its form to allow for free reproduction. It's equally bold that the authors of the work are confident that its content should to be freely circulated in order to be more widely circulated.

*In 2018, Dr. Brooke Sylvia Palmieri, editor of Printing History, launched Camp Books, specializing in making, teaching, and collaborating to preserve LGBTQ history.*

### ¶ *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* by David Pye

HARRY REESE

I have been using the work of David Pye in my classes, studio visits, conversations, and for my own edification since I first learned about his writing and teaching from Kim Merker; while we both were attending the National Collegiate Press Conference at Colorado College, in 1988. When I created an online Book Art Reader in 2000, I selected three passages from *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, which capture Pye's style and clarity. In addition, whenever issues of art and craft come up in the same conversation, I also recommend another important book of his, *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design* (1978).

David Pye furnishes us with a precise terminology for issues relating to workmanship. He cuts past the "hand tool" versus "power tool" level of debate and constructs a better, more consistent framework. "If I must ascribe meaning to the word craftsmanship," he writes in *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, " . . . it means simply workmanship using any kind of technique or apparatus, in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgment, dexterity, and care which the maker exercises as he works. The essential idea is that the quality of the result is continually at risk during the process of making; and so I shall call this kind of workmanship 'The Workmanship of Risk': an uncouth phrase, but at least descriptive."

Pye contrasts this approach with another term of his, "the workmanship of certainty," which he finds most exemplified by mass automation and quantitative production. Speed and economy are normally the incentives behind the workmanship of certainty, and although the quality of the product may be predetermined and predictable, he thinks it usually lacks diversity or character. He believes workmanship can be taught, but never simply by words: 'Design is what, for practical purposes, can be conveyed in words and by drawing: workmanship is what, for practical purposes, can not.'

Pye's work remains important to all who want to understand the history and theory of making things, which is both a longstanding interest of those who teach



print and book art classes, as well as a current focus of scholars and collectors in the humanities, media, and related arts concerned with tools, materiality, and process. And unlike other authors who have written on the topic of craft in 20th century, David Pye's writing reflects his practice, since not only was he a Professor of Furniture Design at the Royal College of Art in London from 1964 to 1974, but he also was a practicing architect, and an accomplished woodworker.

His writing deepens our understanding of ways of working by helping us think more clearly, and we can apply his thinking to any activity or process (from traditional crafts to contemporary art practice) in which some kind of risk and reward is involved with the experience of deliberately making things. David Pye's books broadened the discussion of the efficacy of craftsmanship begun by the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th century by arguing that quality is never dependent on making by hand but, regardless of the tools or technologies, on how much individual attention and how much risk of loss accompany the making. As new technologies appear and older ones recede, his exposition and analysis seem more important than ever.

*After forty years of teaching print and book art classes, Harry Reese retired in June 2018 from UC Santa Barbara and now concentrates full-time on projects with Sandra Liddell Reese at Turkey Press & Edition Reese in Isla Vista.*

## † Hungry Bibliophiles by Russell Maret and Tim Barrett, et al

SANDRA REESE

*Hungry Bibliophiles*, my recommendation for a book that deserves a place on every BCC member's bookshelf, is not a collection of stories about underfed book-lovers. It is, in truth, a grand experiment, in the guise of a cookbook, to test the role of gelatin sizing in papermaking and printing.

In his Keynote speech at the 2013 CODEX Foundation Book Fair & Symposium, Tim Barrett, MacArthur Fellow and Director of Paper Facilities at the University of Iowa, discussed his effort along with his students to recreate the working conditions of a pre-Industrial papermill, employing a three person team to make 100 sheets of handmade paper per hour. Following this presentation a conversation began between Barrett and printer/designer, Russell Maret, about sizing and its negative impact on print quality, but its beneficial impact on the endurance, aesthetics and contemporary use of handmade paper.

As a novice printer using commercially sized papers and later, our own Turkey Press handmade paper, I learned that the issue of receptivity (or rejection) of the paper to an inked matrix is at the heart of all relief printing. Dampening sized paper before printing is a necessary, tedious, humbling, and varied process. If done well, the reward of seeing the typeface slightly bitten into the surface of the paper creating a halo of light around the precise, blackened edge of the letterform sends an endorphin rush through the printer's body. *Do you print damp?* was familiar shoptalk. However, if



writing with an ink pen in the margins and between the lines of a printed text is anticipated, as it was in post-15<sup>th</sup> century books, then paper with a sized surface is necessary to prevent the ink from bleeding into the paper fibers.

Barrett's research into 15th and 16th century European papermaking processes set the stage for an historical study with a contemporary application. He and his colleagues are engaged in an historical process to produce well-made, serviceable paper in an attempt to arbitrate contemporary use—to invite contact and annotation. What, you say, make notes and drawings in the margins of a letterpress book printed on handmade paper—heresy. Enter Russell Maret. "In thinking about how to get people to use Tim's paper more aggressively, it occurred to me that I would have to make a book whose content would tip the scales; a book whose text would encourage people to remove it from the shelf and bring it into the messy world of their daily lives. No book satisfied this requirement better than a cookbook."

Harry Reese and I were invited along with 37 other known bibliophiles to submit recipes for a small cookbook. In turn, each participant agreed to cook as many of the recipes they could within a year, to cook with the book open on their countertop, and to make notes in ink on the book's pages.

I love every aspect of this book and it is safe to say there is something in *Hungry Bibliophiles* that will appeal to makers, collectors, scholars, and students. It is a fine example of how scholarship can lead to creative work and serves as a model for other kinds of investigative productions. It is supple to the touch. Our cover is gradually developing the patina of a well-thumbed corner of an old *Moby Dick* card in the, now obsolete, card catalogs in libraries. The long-stitch binding, inspired by historical specimens and designed by Maria Fredericks, allows the book to stay open on any double page spread like a musical score. Russell Maret is responsible for the design and printing in two new typefaces of his design. The paper, made by Tim Barrett and student co-workers is 20% hemp fiber and 80% cotton fiber. It has its own distinctive paper rattle due to the gelatin sizing which Barrett, Maret, and students added after the sheets were printed.

And, of course, there are the recipes—beginning with the first line of Gaylord Schanilec's instruction for making Instant Oatmeal: Plant a bitter variety of cherry tree in a place frequented by whitetail deer, through Carolee Campbell's Grandma Tygeson's Lamb Shank Stew.

Regrettably, the supple, handmade paper, letterpress book I have described is not for sale.

Fortunately, there is a facsimile edition of selected annotated and adorned pages photographed by E M Ginger at 42-Line available for sale. You will not get the worn library card patina or the lay-flat binding or the sound of heavily sized handmade paper, but you will get the stories, the drawings, color, smudges, spills, stickers and a delicious meal. And that may be just enough.

*Sandra Liddell Reese, co-proprietor with Harry Reese of Turkey Press/Edition Reese, continues to live and work (since 1977) at the same place on Sueño Road in Isla Vista on the Pacific Rim.*



## ¶ Town an Artists' Book

KIM SCHWENK

Dublin is a city of perpetual stories. A city of grit, a medieval stone wall cascade, a tune and a hum, a cry of youth, and a quiet tear from a dark age. While it is a city like every other, it is a town like no other. What most people glean from Dublin is a bit of theatrical misnomer derived from classical interpretation and modern convulsion; a gap of relevance almost timeless, but seemingly overlooked through a gaze of consumption. In fact Dublin, in the cradle of Ireland, has produced a surge of literary and artistic productions over a multitude of centuries and continues to do so in a way that marries the printed word and the visual stage.

When Oscar Wilde wrote in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), "we are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars," a surreptitious swipe about class, marriage, and Irish society, he represented a familiar chime of humanity existing in depravity, yet revealing a sense of tough hope. Much of that hope is reconstructed from our surroundings, our haunts, and our habitats, even our traditions. To peel back a layer of complicated demographic of a city is challenging, especially when it is dirty, unforgiving, cruel, but celebrated as a means to evolve.

Much of the work produced from the Salvage Press is both radically relevant and personal. Based in Dublin, the press stands to "actively preserve the craft of letterpress printing and typography while exploring through practice how this technology is relevant in today's art and design environment." At the same time, it distinguishes the work of emerging literary voices and visual entrepreneurs in a hyper-collective and immersive approach. Jamie Murphy of Salvage Press presented *A Modest Proposal* (2017), coinciding with the 350th anniversary of Jonathan Swift's birthday. This new edition is a raw response to the 1729 original publication that brutally commented on Great Britain's legal and economic exploitation of Ireland. Under the direction of Jamie Murphy, the confluence of words and images confronts us both dimensionally (Imperial folio), and with visual morbidity not withholding the stark black and white reality that infests our society's economic impoverished still to this today. We cannot deny the beauty of the printing, in a perverse way, the text is the skeleton and the paper, image, and binding is the cabinet of flesh and blood.

Similarly, Salvage Press' most recent collectively produced artists' book, *Town* (2018), moves into a shadow on the streets of Dublin where the city becomes the muse. Here again, the press joins a poet and photographer to approach book art as expression, structure, and sequence. We often see artists' books as solely an aesthetic and tactile experience. However, *Town* exists by virtue of professional construction, but it also lives and breathes the provocative artistic dance within a contextualized book specimen. The contemporary poetry of Annemarie Ní Churreáin, known for unearthing the voices of marginalized women in Ireland, speaks to fragility of modernism and the iconoclasm of Ireland's religious and patriarchal institutions. In an excerpt from *Dubhlinn*, Ní Churreáin writes that



“Dark tidal pools remain  
the true tongue of this city, vowels  
blackened by burning, sentenced to sea.

“To learn a language you must first make a home  
and with your body practice every day.

“How to open: find an Ibar branch and kneel.  
The fruit is plenty and holds within a single seed.  
The seed governs where it falls...”

Accompanying the text in *Town* are photographs by contemporary artist Rich Gilligan, embarking on the same journey to capture the resolute grit on the street, but also confronting identities in light and shadow. Certainly, book art has the option to rely on conventional tropes like text and art, image-based narrative, and visual poetry. Salvage Press, though, continues to dissect those easy and comfortable presentations with coarse lashings. We can undoubtedly digest the immaculate typographical design of *Town*, yet what we need to do is reach the obsidian pool and react. Artists' books are allowed to be the unpleasant reminders of histories, as teaching moments beyond aesthetic pleasures. This is what printing methods allow us to do and it is critical to have reinterpretation and representation as a facet of book arts. *Town* rectifies a place and reimagines what is possibly the future of book arts as collective statements. Salvage Press continues to stress the power of its publications to shift the politics of artists' books.

*Kim Schwenk is a part-time rare book cataloger at UC San Diego Special Collections and bookseller with Lux Mentis, Booksellers.*



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*Mallette Dean, a Printmaker and His Art*

BY JOHN HAWK

In the tradition of other distinguished titles published by the Book Club of California, *Mallette Dean, a Printmaker and His Art* is a foundational bibliography and an important chapter in the history of printing in the West. The publication includes more than 625 entries and 200 illustrations, records Mallette Dean's creative work from his prints and paintings to the books he illustrated and printed. Additionally, the book has sections devoted to printed ephemera, bookplates, printers' devices, and a chronology of Dean's exhibitions including works exhibited. The book includes an index, making it especially useful as a reference for collectors, curators, researchers, and all those who wish to learn more about the artistry of Mallette Dean and the history of the fine press book in California.

On Monday, September 17, 2018, John Hawk spoke to a Book Club of California audience about the subject of the Book Club of California's 237th publication *Mallette Dean, a Printmaker and His Art*. An excerpt from the author's remarks is printed below.

Thank you for your attending this evening's program and for the many congratulatory words on the book. There are several individuals at the Club who were key to its publication. I especially want to thank the Publications Committee, as well as





Peter Koch and Jonathan Gerken for their outstanding design. I am also grateful to Richard Wagener for his foreword. Lastly, I also would like to acknowledge Jennifer Sime, Anne Smith, and Kevin Kosik, all of whom were encouraging and supportive. Thank you to all!

Harold Mallette Dean was born in Spokane Washington on March 9, 1907, the first of three children. His father was a display manager and window dresser; his mother was an amateur artist. In his oral history Dean recalled that he had a typical childhood. In high school he studied art and experimented with etching on copper from which he printed Christmas cards. Following graduation he worked briefly in construction before finding employment at a bank where he worked in the advertising department making posters and designing layout for print advertising.

In July of 1927 Dean left Spokane to enroll at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. He lived in Moraga on a small ranch with his aunt, Gertrude Mallette, who was a successful writer. His time in Moraga had positive bearing on his future work. One of his earliest commissions was to illustrate Mallette's book *For Keeps* (1936), published by Doubleday. A review of the book in the *New York Times* noted Dean's "striking linoleum cuts in modern style." Additionally, several of Dean's early compositions as a printmaker, including one that would bring renown, were of East Bay subjects.



Dean studied at the California School of Fine Arts for three years and made an impression among the faculty. A detail of his earliest print *In China Town San Francisco* was reproduced in the school's 1928 catalogue. During his final year at the school he moved to San Francisco where he rented a small cottage on Russian Hill. That May the *San Francisco Chronicle* printed an article about the upcoming student exhibition at the school, noting that work by Dean was to be featured. It also reported that he was one of three students from the school to be awarded a scholarship to study at the Art Students League of New York. A review published in the *Chronicle* noted that the exhibit of frescoes by students of Ray Boynton was "outstanding." One large grouping created by Dean and two classmates depicted figures based upon poems by Robinson Jeffers. It was noted that the fresco "was highly praised by Matisse during a recent visit."

Following graduation, Dean moved to New York but lack of funds for living expenses was a challenge and eventually he left the school due to financial constraints. He remained in New York for a period, supporting himself by creating window displays and selling colored, block-print Christmas cards. Circumstances of the Depression made it difficult to remain there, and in August of 1931 he returned to San Francisco. Any lingering disappointment was soon a thing of the past: he was successful in showing his work in back-to-back exhibitions. He exhibited in a show of drawings and watercolors at the Art Center at 730 Montgomery, which included works by Victor Arnautoff and Valenti Angelo. The following month he exhibited at the Galerie Beaux Arts in the invitational *North-South* exhibition, a show featuring "promising younger artists." During this period Dean also met Vivien Neill and in December that year the couple married.

With the recommendation of his former teachers, Dean was one of the artists hired for the Public Works of Art Project to create murals for Coit Tower. He assisted with ceiling designs and contributed two full panels. One is a figure of a stockbroker; the other is the physicist and Nobel Prize winner, Albert Abraham Michelson. Following completion of the Coit Tower murals in October of 1934, Dean transferred to the Treasury Relief Art Project. He also soon began his long and fruitful association with the Grabhorn Press.

Dean could not have stepped into a better environment to pursue illustration and observe the ins and outs of book design and letterpress printing. He was employed at first on a freelance basis and worked from his studio on Jackson Street. A significant amount of his work for the Grabhorns involved designing decorative initials. Dean's contributions could be subtle: he also drew silhouettes, cut color blocks for illustrations, and created designs in relief that were printed for patterned boards. His first work for the Grabhorns, *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls* (1935) featured six full-page wood engravings. It was followed by *Solstice and Other Poems* (1935) by Robinson Jeffers and *Wah-To-Yah & the Taos Trail* (1936) by Lewis Hector Garrard. All three books had the distinction of being included in the American Institute of Graphic Arts' "Fifty Best Books of the Year" exhibition.



The second half of the decade was a banner period for Dean. He had the experience and acclaim of the Coit Tower murals in his portfolio; his illustrations graced titles that were recognized by the AIGA; and he was gaining recognition as a printmaker. In 1935 his prints were exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Art. It would be the first of many shows there for Dean. The federal programs gave him the ongoing support to pursue printmaking; employment at the Grabhorn Press gave him income and experience that would shape his knowledge of printing and book design. It is difficult to imagine how Dean found time for all of his projects. By the end of 1940 he had contributed illustrations and initials to over thirty-five titles. He pursued his printmaking with equal vigor, creating nearly fifty prints and showing his work in more than twenty-five exhibitions.

In 1941, Dean's work was shown in over a dozen exhibitions, the most of any year to date for the artist. He had a solo exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art in February, followed by several group shows throughout the year. In a review of the show published in the *Chronicle*, Alfred Frankenstein noted that "the precision, clarity, crispness, and subtle simplicity of Dean's style have resulted in his winning many prizes in every print show hereabouts, and with full justice, for he has a beautiful sense of design, and ranks with Paul Landacre and a very few others among American masters of the wood engraving." Following U.S. entry into the War, Dean worked in Bay Area shipyards. He was employed first in Richmond, then in Sausalito at Madden and Lewis shipyard. In June of 1942 Dean and his family moved from San Francisco to Fairfax. There were minor projects during this period, but the wartime economy and work in the shipyards tempered his output. No prints were created from 1942 to 1946; not until after the War would Dean return to illustration and printmaking.

Following the War, Dean created window displays and commercial art for businesses in nearby San Anselmo and San Rafael. He also was able to return to work in his studio. Dean's home was situated on a hillside and, while working in the shipyard, he had undertaken a project to remove earth and build a studio on the lower level of the home. Once completed, Dean was able to relocate his press which had been in storage. Dean took satisfaction in his home studio: life and work in Fairfax put him closer to his family and the outdoors that he loved.

Dean also returned to part-time work with the Grabhorns. Among the projects he worked on during this period was De Soto's *The Discovery of Florida* (1946), printed for the Book Club. That year Jane Grabhorn introduced Mallette Dean to the Club's membership in an article for the *Quarterly News-Letter* (Winter 1946). She wrote of Dean's frescoes, paintings, prints, illustrated books, and the decorative initials he created for the forthcoming edition of *The Discovery of Florida*. His illustrations "so individual in design, carry such an air of distinction, and are so skillfully executed..." She went on to describe Dean as a "reflective, tall and smiling, rather extraordinary artist-craftsman."

Dean resumed his work for the Colt Press as well. That year the press published *A Letter from Anthony Trollope Describing a Visit to California in 1875* (1946). At the same time, he undertook his first book-length collaboration with the Lewis and Dorothy





Allen on *The Diary of Patrick Breen* (1946). Dean and the Allens would go on to have a fruitful history together. Over a twenty-five-year period, Dean contributed to more than twenty titles by the press. Far from having an exclusive arrangement with one press, Dean accepted commissions from a number of printers and publishers; his illustrations were in high demand.

In 1949 Dean met James E. Beard, a printer and publisher who would become a collaborator and close friend. Beard was a Napa Valley commercial publisher who sought Dean to illustrate materials for Charles Krug Winery. Dean created linocuts that the winery reprinted in a variety of formats. The work was so well received that it opened doors for several other commissions in the wine industry.

Dean's employment with the Grabhorn Press ended in the early 1950s. His departure was a natural transition as his work was in demand and he wanted to design and print his own books. He had recently completed a project for the publisher Paul Elder, illustrating *The House on Mallorca* (1950), and *This Sudden Empire California* (1950) was published the same year by the Society of California Pioneers. In addition, Dean had recently had joined the faculty of the California School of Fine Arts where from 1951 to 1953 he taught graphic arts, typography, and silkscreen printing.

In 1952 Dean took on his most ambitious project to date. After considerable experience observing other printers, he printed his first book: *Physiologus: The Very*



*Ancient Book of Beasts, Plants and Stones* (1953), published by the Book Club. It is one of his most successful works. Dean undertook the entirety of production, including design, illustration, typesetting, printing, hand coloring, and edition binding. As the edition size was 325 copies, the amount of hand coloring was staggering. The book was a family project in that Vivien directed the coloring of the illustrations and their daughter Debora assisted as well. The book was the Club's Christmas book for 1953 and it sold for \$19.50.

Following publication of *Physiologus*, there was no shortage of work. Dean went on to print twenty-eight monographs, including seven for the Book Club. He also designed, illustrated, and printed books for Dawson's Book Shop and the Roxburghe Club. He illustrated commercial publications, creating color wood engravings for *San Francisco Street Names* (1954), published by the American Trust Company, and also for *Deep Roots: The History of Blake, Moffitt & Town, Pioneers in Paper Since 1855*, published in 1955. He had the artistic freedom to pursue his own projects and commissions as he wished.

Dean's follow-up book for the Book Club was Robinson Jeffers' *Themes in My Poems* (1956). The book's woodcut initials and modern illustrations have a spare elegance. Jeffers found the book to be "beautiful" and in a letter to the Book Club he wrote, "Mallette Dean has done a fine job and I congratulate him. I wish the contents may be worthy of the setting he has given them, but that is not for me to judge." Another particularly successful title that year was *Adventures in California* (1956). Dean illustrated, printed, and bound the edition for Dawson's *Early California Travel Series*. A letter from Albert Sperisen sums up perfectly the success of the book: "Dear Mallette, this is a fan letter. Dawson's have just sent me your *Adventures in California*. This truly is an outstanding book—in every respect! The design is excellent—the engravings are wonderful—the typesetting and the printing is near perfect and the binding is a joy!"

Over the next several years, Dean continued to design and print books for the Book Club and to provide illustrations for titles published by the Allen Press. *Ah Sin: A Dramatic Work* by Mark Twain and Bret Harte was published by the Book Club in 1961; *Yo Semite, 1878: Adventures of N & C* followed in 1964. Among the several Allen Press books of the period to which Dean contributed, perhaps the best known is *The Splendid Idle Forties: Six Stories of Spanish California* (1960) by Gertrude Atherton. The title page and hand-colored decorative initials give the book its broad visual appeal. The same year Dean also collaborated with James Beard on *Huey, the Engineer* by Jesse Stuart. The book is illustrated with color wood engravings that are among Dean's finest.

Between 1967 and 1971 Dean designed and printed three books for the Book Club. *Upper California* (1967) by Heinrich Künzel is notable for its stand-out title page that is a color woodcut. The book was followed in 1969 with the publication of *Archy Lee: A California Fugitive Slave Case* by Rudolph M. Lapp. For the publication Dean worked with his friend and collaborator, James Beard. Dean's final project for the Book Club was *Ah-Wah-Ne Days* (1971). The title includes eight illustrations, done in relief, of iconic California scenes from the Yosemite Valley.



Dean created relief-cut illustrations throughout his career, but following the War he had gradually moved away from printmaking. His final book commission, published a year before his death, allowed him to return to printmaking in a manner that he had not undertaken since the 1930s. In *Discovering Marin: Historical Tour by Cities and Towns* (1974) by Louis Tether, published by the Tamal Land Press, Dean created twenty-seven linocuts of Marin County scenes. The images were reduced for publication in the book, but Dean made several prints from the series from the original, full-size blocks. One can imagine how the project would have appealed to him.

In his artist's statement from his solo exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1941, Dean wrote, "I have spent much time in the out of doors. Many of the things shown here are taken from or inspired by the landscape about me. It is my aim to vigorously state the 'spirit' of the subject in a simple and communicable manner." Mallette Dean spent his career sharing that spirit in his prints, paintings, and illustrations and he created an enduring visual record. His illustrations and images of Northern California are evocative of a time and place, but so too they are timeless and speak to us today as they will for future generations who love California and the finely printed book.

*John Hawk is Head Librarian of Special Collections & University Archives at the University of San Francisco. He is a past president of the Book Club of California.*

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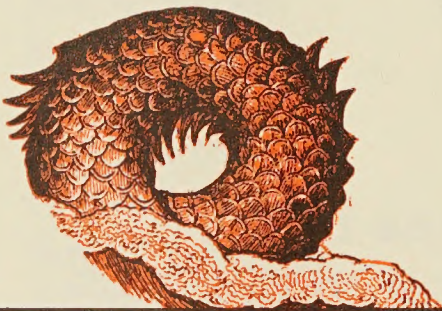
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